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Borderscaping

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Published in:
Journal of Borderlands Studies

Publication date:
2017

Document version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for pulished version (APA):
Stoklosa, K. (2017). Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making. Journal of Borderlands Studies.

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Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making

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To cite this article: Katarzyna Stokłosa (2017): Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making, Journal of Borderlands Studies, DOI: [10.1080/08865655.2017.1332490](https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2017.1332490)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2017.1332490>



Published online: 20 Jun 2017.



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BOOK REVIEW

Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making, by Chiara Brambilla, Jussi Laine, James W. Scott, and Gianluca Bocchi (eds.), Farnham, Ashgate, 2015, 260 pp., ISBN: 9781472451460.

In this anthology, the editors present the results of five years' research work in line with two EU FP7 projects: EUROBORDERSCAPES and EUROBORDERREGIONS. The fact that the consortium of EUROBORDERSCAPES included 22 partner institutions from 17 different states, in both EU- and non EU-countries is particularly noteworthy.

The editors first explain the meaning of borderscapes in their "Dedication." This "evocative concept" is used "as a way of approaching bordering processes from specific geographical and social contexts" (p. XV). The combination of bordering and borderscape perspectives provides "a powerful link between processes of social and political transformation, conceptual change and local experience" (p. XV).

In their introduction, the editors present recent conceptual changes in the study of borders. They emphasize that the book "aims to make a constructive contribution to debate within border studies" (p. 1) and plead for "a more complex understanding of borders by adopting a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approach" (p. 3).

The book consists of five parts that introduce conceptual, geopolitical, social and cultural issues with regard to bordering. In the first section, "Conceptual Change in Thinking Borders," authors from diverse disciplines (political science, social and economic geography, political geography, and landscape architecture) analyze the concept of the border and various methodological approaches, as well as processes of political, social and cultural change that influence border studies. Anna Krasteva, political scientist, opens this section and explores various meanings of spaces, lines and borders. Her core thesis is that "If the borders did not exist, spaces and lines would have created them" (p. 24). Krasteva states that "the less relevant the borders become in international relations, the more intense the research on them is" (p. 21). This links with the fact that even if borders are as old as nation states, "re/de/bordering, scaling, ordering, othering still appear fresh and inspire experimentation, creativity, innovation" (p. 25).

In the second part, "Everyday Processes of Bordering," representatives from the fields of political geography, history, social sciences, political sociology and political science, analyze the impact of official policies, political debates and cultural exchange on diverse border locations. Jussi Laine, a political geographer, and Miika Tervonen, a historian and social scientist, analyze perceptions of the Finnish-Russian border in the Finnish media. The authors demonstrate that the dominant picture is that of "Russia as the Problematic Other" (p. 73).

Feelings of superiority are widespread among Finns; they see their neighbor as powerful but uncivilized. Laine and Tervonen conclude that the Finnish "media has played a central role in maintaining the border by actively (re)producing historical images and narratives" (p. 74). Other contributions in this subject area deal with the Hizbullah Memorial Museum in South Lebanon, the historical relationship between Croatian and Serbian literature in the Balkan region and with bordering and cross-bordering processes in the Croatian-Slovenian borderlands.

The third section, "Exploring Shifting Euro/Mediterranean Borderscapes" deals with particularly current issues, specifically the Euro/Mediterranean border and migration. Anthropologists, geographers, lawyers, philosophers, economic geographers and architects explore these

issues from different perspectives. Using the example of the *LampedusaInFestival* from 2013, the anthropologist Chiara Brambilla explores the interaction between the political and aesthetic implications of the Euro/African border and migration problems. Paolo Cuttitta, a lawyer, analyzes the interaction between three migration narratives: the humanitarian, the securitarian and the religious-cultural. By adopting two different perspectives, the perspective of migration controls at sea and the perspective of integration policies, Cuttitta shows how the three narratives have jointly contributed to the production and transformation of the Mediterranean borderscape.

In the fourth part, “Rebordering State Spaces: City Borders and Border Cities,” three anthropologists and one linguist deal with the socio-cultural, political and economic changes of city borders and border cities. They analyze new urban *borderscapes* and new understandings of cities. Anna Lazzarini, an anthropologist, concludes that the result of the enormous changes within social relationships, ways of living, moving, using space, communicating, and carrying out daily functions, is “an extraordinary social, cultural and political complexity” (p. 183) of urban spaces. Catharina Miele, another anthropologist, describes the history of housing policies regarding Roma people in the city of Naples. It is her opinion that the concept of *borderscapes* assists the understanding of this policy of multiplication and fragmentation of borders within the European region itself. Miele highlights that the Roma people’s and other marginalized minorities’ practices of crossing, negotiating and contesting borders, demonstrate the importance of focusing on *borderscapes* rather than geopolitical and urban walls.


In the fifth and final section, “Cultural Production and the Emergence of New Borderscapes,” a media scientist, two linguists and an art-historian deal with bordering and borderscaping in connection with different forms of cultural production. Cristina Giudice, a contemporary art-historian, explains how contemporary artists use their works to manifest conceptual change in thinking about borders. She uses the concept of *borderscape* to explain identity, as well as borders, as narratives and as imaginary units.

This book’s particular strength lies in its consistent interdisciplinary character. Representatives from diverse scholarly disciplines have used the concept of *borderscapes* to analyze conceptual, geopolitical, social, cultural, practical and methodological issues of bordering.

For the purposes of cataloguing, indexing, and development, there is an index at the end of the volume (pp. 255–260). There are also a “List of Figures and Tables” (p. VII), “Notes on Contributors” with profiles of the contributing authors (pp. IX–XIII) and a “List of Abbreviations” (p. XVII) at the beginning of the book.

This publication is, without a doubt, obligatory reading for all border studies’ researchers.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2017.1332490>

